

The Luck of Feng Pu

Strange Way Fortune Came to an American In Shanghai

By CLARISSA MACKIE

In the narrow, crooked Street of a Thousand Ways the Chinese crowd suddenly paused and then scattered to huddle against the doorways. There was the shrill cry of coolies, and around a corner came a mandarin's curtained chair borne by swift runners. A dash of green and gold and crimson, and the retinue swept by, leaving the pedestrians free to proceed along the muddy way.

John Marston, resuming his stroll through the street of old Shanghai stooped and picked a bit of yellow out of the mud. It was a flat piece of amber carved into dragon form, and a morsel of golden chain hinted that it might have formed part of a handsome ornament. He tucked it into his pocket, not knowing that the deed was to affect all his after-life.

John Marston's presence in Shanghai was, in a way, accidental. He had started on a tour of the orient in the capacity of private secretary to a man of large affairs. His employer had died while they were in the Chinese treaty port, and John was adrift with little money, a few new acquaintances and a big appetite for work. Incidentally there was a girl back home in Massachusetts who was waiting for him to make good.

He pocketed the amber dragon and went on his way toward the gate which led out upon the Bund.

He paused for a moment in the opening to examine the amber ornament he had found.

A viselike grip on his arm drew him back into the shadow of the city gate. He whirled about and wrenched himself free to confront a small, wizened Chinaman whose slant eyes spat hateful sparks.

"Have got?" shrilled the man. "Have got what?" growled the American.

"So?" The other pointed at the bit of golden chain dangling from John's fingers. "Have got him?"

"You mean this?" asked the American, unclenching his hand. The other nodded.

"You save good luck?"

John laughed. "Oh, I know what it means, but it doesn't come my way," he said.

The other frowned impatiently.

"Come! Have luck?" he insisted. "Prove it!" agreed John Marston and pocketing the bundle prepared to



"THEN THE PROPHECY WILL COME TRUE" MURMURED THE ASIATIC.

follow his guide. Although a comparative stranger to the ways of the Asiatic, he had already learned that in the native city it was especially desirable to beware of strangers. And even now while he followed the Chinaman through many a devious way into the heart of the ancient walled city he was ever watchful for an ambuscade.

To his surprise the way turned again and led back toward the river, and at last they came out upon a groovy flight of stone steps that led down to the water's edge. Sampan boats crowded the waterway, and all the teeming life of the housesboats reached out to fringe the river bank. Out in the stream a fine pleasure junk swung awkwardly with the tide.

Out of the maze of housesboats a sampan darted, and the Chinese beckoned John Marston to follow him.

"Good luck! Come!" he said mysteriously.

"I'll take a chance on it," decided Marston, and entered the teetering craft.

The sampan cooee passed the little boat skillfully out into the stream and swung in under the beam of the beautiful junk.

"Shanghsied, I wonder?" smiled

Marston to himself as he mounted the carved wooden steps.

The Lo Wei Shong was evidently the pleasure craft of a rich man. The seats were of heavy silk or fine matting; there were much carving and gilding on its elaborately decorated sides, and under a striped silk canopy reclined one of the largest Chinamen that Marston had ever seen. Sleepy eyed with a wide, crooked mouth, his richly gowned figure was sprawled in a carved ebony chair, while his yellow fingers held a gold lacquered pipe.

He lifted his heavily lidded eyes, and a glint came into them as he saw the American and his companion.

"Ah, Ping," he said in good English. "you have brought the keeper of my luck."

"Yes, gracious highness," stammered the wizened little man.

"Be seated, please," Feng Pu waved Marston to another carved chair. "Tea, Ping," he commanded.

"This call is an unexpected pleasure," remarked Marston coolly.

"Not unexpected by me," smiled the mandarin.

"What do you mean?" asked the other quickly. "Why," he added sharply, "you are getting under way. Where are we going?"

"Be calm, my friend," smiled the other imperturbably. "I am merely taking you for a pleasure trip."

"Thank you, but I cannot go today," decided Marston hastily.

Feng Pu sighed. "You Americans are so abrupt," he murmured regretfully.

Marston laughed heartily. "Not as abrupt as you Chinese," he said. "Fifteen minutes ago I had never heard of you, and now you are taking me on a pleasure trip to—where?"

"A place of good luck," said the other looking at him under flickering lids.

"Heaven knows I need it—whole chunks of good luck," groaned Marston, with a sudden, bleak realization of his position.

"Then the prophecy will come true," murmured the Asiatic.

Marston stared. "What prophecy?"

"The prophecy of the geomancer who foretold that on a certain day I should be traveling through the Street of a Thousand Ways and I should lose my luck—and should find it again."

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"Then the prophecy will come true," murmured the Asiatic.

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"The prophecy of the geomancer who foretold that on a certain day I should be traveling through the Street of a Thousand Ways and I should lose my luck—and should find it again."

"Well?"

"I lost my luck—my lucky stone to day—and my servant Ping saw you pick it up," said the mandarin quietly.

Marston pulled the amber dragon from his pocket. "This is yours?" he asked.

Feng Pu's eyes glistened. "Yes," he hissed. "It has all been foretold long, long ago while I was still a young man. A geomancer in the bazaar predicted that I should lose my luck and find a friend and find my luck all in the same day."

"Thank you," smiled Marston amiably. "Am I your friend or your luck?"

"My friend, I hope," said the other quietly. "This is no jest—this stone." He fastened the amber trinket to a long jade chain which swayed from his neck. "This stone is the luck of my family, but there is greater luck in store for the one who solves the secret." He twirled the tail of the amber dragon and revealed a tiny cavity from which he drew a bit of oiled silk. "It was given to my grandfather by an American sea captain who was taken prisoner by some river pirates. He had found some treasure and hidden it, and he would not give it up to the pirates. We never say this name, and my father could not understand the directions, and so we have waited, hoping that some day we would meet a foreigner we could trust." He stopped abruptly. His greed for the legendary treasure had for the moment overcome his native caution, but re-covering himself he watched the young American carefully while he unrolled the tiny scroll of oiled silk, on which appeared neat black letters:

"Marston, frown at the scroll, stared and went off into a gale of laughter.

Feng Pu scowled angrily. Who was this American dog that he should make a jest of a mandarin's lucky stone? But he must know the secret. Then the American could be dropped over into the river for all Feng Pu cared. He shrugged his fat shoulders.

John Marston stared at the nursery rhyme that was neatly lettered on the little scroll—

Ding, dong bell,
Ping's in the well.
Who put her in?
Little Thomas Green.

"Was the captain's name Green—Thomas Green?" he asked Feng Pu.

"So says the scroll," nodded the man with a stiff smile.

"And do you know the nature of the treasure?"

"Precious stones."

"And have you any idea where Captain Green might have hidden them?"

"He was captured in the courtyard of the temple of a thousand eyes. We are approaching it now," said Feng Pu quietly.

"And if I find your good luck?" asked Marston.

"Half is yours," asserted the other blandly.

"A written agreement to that effect?" asked the American.

The mandarin shrugged his shoulders. "I will seal for my secretary." He clapped his hands, and Ping came running.

The agreement was duly written,

signed and witnessed ere they reached the jutting point of land where a winding path led up to a half ruined temple among the mulberry trees.

As they entered a sampan and went over the absurd bridge he had discovered on the little scroll which the man with a thousand eyes. Over one shoulder Marston carried a coil of rope. He believed he had solved the hiding place of the hidden treasure, slightly hinted at in the nursery rhyme.

The stones of the courtyard echoed

to the tread of many feet. Bats flew out of dusty corners of the crumbling building. In the corner of the yard was an ancient well curb. Marston went there and tossed a lighted match into its depths.

It was dry. A heap of dead leaves

flashed a feeble flame and then died out in a puff of smoke.

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THERE WAS A CONCERTED RUSH UPON THE AMERICAS.

fellow American, who might solve it and be benefited by the knowledge.

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ered on the little scroll which the man-

with-a-thousand-eyes treasured so highly. What did Captain Thomas Green mean by in-

trust his secret to a Chinese, yet

telling it under a simple nursery rhyme?

Perhaps young Thomas Green had

hoped that sooner or later his secret

writing might come to the hand of a

"I will go down here first," he told the mandarin, and if Feng Pu was surprised he concealed his emotion.

Marston took one end of the rope to a stone post and, stepping over the curb, let himself down into the thick water well. Overhead the curb was darkened with a fringe of curly yet low faces and staring eyes.

The American made a startling discovery. In one side of the well was an opening into a lateral passage. He did not stoop to enter the passage—the Chinaman must not know about it. If he failed in his search and they decided to stone him from above he must have a safe retreat. He stooped and scratched among the leaves till the time looking for some loose stone in the side or some recess where Thomas Green might have hidden his treasure. All at once he saw it—just within the mouth of the passage a cat's head rudely scratched on one of the stones.

Still stooping he scratched his arm and jerked out the stone. A small leather pouch tumbled out into his hand. That was all. Clutching them he cautiously opened the pouch, hitting it from the curious eyes above.

A score of rare jewels flashed into his palm—rubies, emeralds and two large yellow diamonds. Hastily he slipped them away.

He returned the others to the leather pouch and called to the Chinese to pull him out.

The mandarin was watching him narrowly. There was a crafty look on the faces of the servants. He knew that his life was not worth ten pieces.

He was glad that an automatic gun was in his life pocket.

"You have found my luck?" asked Feng Pu.

Marston put the bag into the cover hands.

Feng Pu opened it and caressed the stones with greedy fingers.

"There are only ten," he muttered.

"Five will satisfy me," put in Marston sternly.

Feng Pu started as if repulsed at something unpleasant. He returned the stones to the bag, dropped it into his capacious sleeve and nodded to his servants.

There was a concerted rush upon the American. He was not taken by surprise, so when they lifted him to the well curb he was prepared for the

fall and despite his efforts to hold on.

A shower of large stones were hurled after him. He went into the passage way and counted his half of the treasure. "It's a good thing I counted out my half now," he chattered. "Now for home and Madeline."

He waited until the stars shone over his head, and then he made his way through the passage. Just inside stock of matches gave out, he smelled the salt air of the river and presently pushed his way through a thicket and came out upon the river bank. In the distance gleamed the lights of the city. The secret passage of the old river pit rates had so led his life.

A lonely sampan man heard his fall and took him down to Shanghai. Marston's garments were dislodged by the boatman.

The next morning John Marston sailed away from the China shore. When it was only a flat yellow streak in the distance he saw his hat in farewell. "Talk about the luck of Feng Pu!" he chuckled. "It isn't a patch on the luck of John Marston." And today John Marston's oldest son is named Thomas Green Marston.

JACK SHEPPARD as a Text.

Jack Sheppard had a hard hold upon the imagination of the people of his time. The fact that 200,000 people witnessed his execution at Tyburnian on Nov. 18, 1724, is some witness to his great popularity. But one of the strangest tributes ever paid him was the sermon preached upon him in a London church.

"Oh, that ye were not like Jack Sheppard!" began the preacher, to the satisfaction of his flock. He went on to draw a parallel between things of the flesh and those of the soul and to point out that the soul is shown to have breaking might have been bestowed upon "reckless the body of the heart with the nail of remorse."

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